

WISCONSIN



[www.poorpeoplescampaign.org](http://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org)

February 12, 2019

Dear Elected Representatives of the State of Wisconsin.

As you begin a new term, we write to call your attention to our state's most profound and pressing issues — the livelihood and well being of Wisconsin's 2.3 million poor and struggling residents.

Although we are the majority of those who you represent, our issues are rarely represented in the political arena, partly because of voter suppression tactics that keep thousands from voting: reduced or nonexistent early voting days and hours, restrictive voter ID laws, disenfranchisement of currently and formerly incarcerated people, racist gerrymandering and redistricting, names purged from voter rolls, among others.

The leaders of the Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign are concerned about the recent voter suppression tactics; specifically, the action taken by former Governor Scott Walker during the lame duck legislative session, whereby on December 14, 2018, he signed a Republican-written legislative package that restricts early voting to only two weeks before an election, and weakens the power of incoming Governor Anthony Evers and Attorney General Josh Kaul. This was viewed as Walker's way of enabling a power grab before he departed the office of Governor, ignoring the will of Wisconsin voters.

As leaders of the Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, we are uniting the poor - Black, White, Latinx, Native and Asian - across sexual orientations, gender identity, age, ability, and including people of all faiths and conscience, around a Moral Agenda based on our Fundamental Rights to vote, work, live and thrive in this country.

Last Spring, we organized nearly 6,000 people nationwide to participate in nonviolent civil disobedience. For six weeks in May and June 2018, more than 30,000 poor and disenfranchised people, clergy and moral leaders joined this Campaign. We flooded over 35 statehouses from coast-to-coast and the U.S. Capitol, demanding a massive overhaul of this nation's moral compass. We addressed this nation's voting rights laws and offered new programs to lift up the 140 million Americans living in poverty, experiencing ecological devastation, living under the negative impact of militarism and the war economy, and the humanitarian devastation at our southern border. This was the most expansive wave of nonviolent direct action in contemporary U.S. history.

In Wisconsin, our members rallied for five weeks from May to June, 2018 at our Madison State Capitol building, each time leaving a list of demands with then Governor Walker. During the Monday marches, rallies, and protests, 55 out of about 2,500 advocates took things a step further by demonstrating their commitment to the principles of the Poor People's Campaign. They applied the principles of nonviolent civil



disobedience. These exercises resulted in the issuance of municipal citations and fines by the Madison Police Department.

Hundreds of poor and disenfranchised people testified throughout the nation and made their demands known. On October 17, 2018, the Wisconsin Poor People's Hearing was held in Racine, Wisconsin. The event was well attended by elected officials, candidates for elected office, clergy, community leaders and poor people from around Wisconsin. The five testifiers told their personal stories of living in poverty while earning only the minimum wage, discrimination, and the struggles of immigrants and ex-offenders.

We have come together because Wisconsin is in a moral crisis. In our state, about forty percent of Wisconsinites—about 2.3 million of our fellow citizens—are poor or low-income, including 680,000 children, 1.2 million women, 704,000 people of color and 1.5 million White people. 109,000 of our veterans have less than \$35,000 in income. All this in a state where working at the minimum wage takes a nearly 90-hour work week to afford a two-bedroom apartment. 1.2 million workers—44% of Wisconsin's workforce—earn less than \$15 per hour. About 664,000 of our neighbors depend on SNAP benefits for food. Yet while all this is happening, Wisconsin has spent about \$4 billion in public subsidies for corporations in five years (not counting the billions offered to Foxconn), and the richest 1% of Wisconsin residents will absorb 28% of the benefits of the new federal tax law.

On the issue of mass incarceration, of the nearly 24,000 incarcerated people in Wisconsin, 55% are people of color; Black residents are incarcerated at 12 times the rate of White residents—the second highest disparity in the United States. There are 415,000 Wisconsinites without health insurance; and thousands of Wisconsinites are homeless.

It doesn't need to be this way. We know there are enough resources in this land of plenty to address our basic needs and more. Many of the extremist policies that are harming our communities are debated and passed in the great halls of our state capitol building. This is why we, the Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign, are holding you accountable to our needs and demands. We will continue to organize, mobilize and educate residents across this state around our Moral Agenda, until all of our demands are satisfied. We will continue to move forward together, toward a more perfect union.

Fight poverty, not the poor!

Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

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